

# Spectrum

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## Editor's Introduction

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# College of Liberal Arts

## Department of Anthropology



# Editor's Introduction

Rebecca Gibson

May, 2018

In this, the seventh issue of *Spectrum*, three things converged: my editorship, the fact that I was asked to teach a class on death and death rituals, and the 200-year anniversary of the initial publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. This convergence ultimately created the main theme of this issue, death and the body, while still asking the ultimate question of anthropology. The ultimate question of anthropology, the driving force behind our work, is the question of what it means to be human. What makes us, or are we even, unique? What does it mean to be a separate species, where is the boundary between life and death, what information lies within our DNA that accounts for traits we seemingly do not share with other species: these are all sub-questions that address various parts of the *ology of anthropos*.

To begin our issue, Hannah Corrow examines the possibility that *Homo sapiens sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis* were at one time not separate enough to be considered distinct species, based on recent DNA revelations. Written for my ANTH415 class on human origins, this paper and the next few papers draw their inspiration from Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Galapagos*, which is a rather prescient look at the potentials of the founder effect in speciation. Following Corrow's work, Anthony Hines gives us an example of human self-categorization, by looking at the similarities between the groups represented by marines, and by Native Americans. Both groups stringently internalize what it means to be a group member, and that membership is lifelong regardless of circumstances. Next, Abigail Karparis examines how quickly speciation can occur, by looking at how some birds lost their ability to fly. This detailed overview of characteristics speaks to the evolutionary advantages and disadvantages of flight, and how genetics allows for the retention of vestigial structures far past their evolutionary usefulness. After Karparis, Zach Wallace looks at how technology and culture influence each other, using the example of the US withdrawal from the Paris accord. To round off this section, Madeline Mullen then demonstrates how the recessive gene for hemophilia has changed the course of world history with an interdisciplinary contemplation of the British royal family's interconnectedness with the rest of European royalty, and the way in which their inherited disease pulled the strings of fate across the continent, and the world, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

To bring us into the morbid portion of this issue, Benjamin Monti tells us what to do in the event of a zombie apocalypse. Zombie are a runaway cultural phenomenon recently, and with the question of the undead looming over us, we might all do well to prepare for any potential change in what it means to be human, dead, alive, or reanimated. Next, Zach Wallace shows how the trade in bodies, whole or in part, has changed over time, and examines how we can ethically source the body parts we need, while respecting the people from which they came.

Finally, there are three visual projects, each continuing the overall theme—in the first, Riley Boss created a hanging timeline of anatomization. This timeline, divided by centuries across the top, and events hanging from those century markers, is a beautiful visual representation of how laws and ethics have changed in regard to anatomical autonomy, and delightfully compliments Wallace's paper. Then Dakota Hippen gives a similar interpretation of process of anatomization, in a hand drawn and carefully narrated video. Taken together, these creations epitomize the different research styles open to our students, and singularly each has created an easily approachable tool to assist in others' learning about this topic. Finally, Kaley Shepard designed and drew a

interactive short magazine on the fascination with death held by people of the Victorian period. In stunning and intricate color, she has included illustrations, puzzles, games, and informative panels, to engage her reader with this fascinating subject.

When Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley sat down on a dark and stormy night to write the story that would become *Frankenstein*, it is doubtful she would have connected it to the relatively new-at-the-time discipline of anthropology. However, having man make a creature in his own image, and having that creature desperately try to come to grips with its own existence, humanity, mortality, and uniqueness, foreshadowed our experiences with trying to answer the question of who, and what, we are as humans. The works in this issue ask this question, and move us closer, even if ever so slightly, to being able to answer it. I wish to thank the students for their amazing hard work, and fantastic contributions, and their curiosity about humans, our past, our history, and our future. I hope you will enjoy reading them as much as I.

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